

THE
CHARACTER
OF A
London
SCRIVENER.

Printed in the Year MDCLXVII.

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L O N D O N
SCRIVENER

IS a Creature begot by a *Pen*, and hatch'd up in an *Ink-pot*. Lesser stuff serves to his production, than to a *Countrey Pedlar's*: the wing of a *Goose* sets up forty of them. His *Gown* is curs'd to a perpetual *Attumn*, hence 'tis ever bare, and has as little *wool* upon it, as if at next remove it were to be made *Parchment*; his *Ears* hang on like rotten fruit, the least unkind blast of a *Passenger* blows them off; his *Ink* is *Poyson* had it neither *Gall* nor *Copprice*; he looks like the *by-blow* of a *Country Attorney*, from whom he differs as a *Botcher* does from from a *Taylor*. The *Attorney* may have the honour to goe to *Hell* on *horse-back*, while the base *Knave* fairly *foots* it after him. With Relation to the *Common-wealth* he is a *neceßary Evil*, without whom men would grow *bo-nest* and *friends*, and then the *Body Politick* must needs fall, being no longer compounded of different

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Elements and Humours. Better *Schollers* there are many, but few greater *Writers*: and those that have cursed the Invention of the *Press* for others sakes, may more justly do the same to that of the *Pen* for *his*. I should guess his Trade of very great *Antiquity*, since I read *God* made *Indentures of Covenant* with *Adam*, but that we know *Adam* had no money, and the *Scrivener* would not do it *Gratis*. Beside, had *God* made *Scriveners*, he would never have pronounced of the seven days work, that all was good. Had *Scriveners* been in the *old World*, it had saved the *Deluge*, and accursed Mankind had destroyed one another. A surreptitious race of men, not of *Gods Creation*, but born (like *Vermin*) out of the corruption of several *Ag s*, or (like some *Africk Monsters*) the *Anphibious* Product of a *Heterogeneous Copulation*: for when Persons of different *Interests* and *humours* met together in a Contract, this *Jarring Conjunction* begat *Scriveners*, who at first (Viper-like devoured their *Parents*; and have ever since (like a *Wolf* in the fiddle) gnaw'd their *Livelihood* out of the bowels of those they hang upon. Methinks they should be banished all well governed *Kingdoms*; or at least (like *Jews* in *Italy*) wear a mark of distinction about them, like persons that dwell in *Infected houses*, that endangered *Passengers* may see and avoid them. Where they once get in, they spread like the
Itch,

Itch, and become as universal as the *Sickness*; had a *Scrivener* been among the *Israelites*, there needed no other punishment to have forced them out of *Egypt*: They themselves had been the *greatest Plague*, and *Pharaoh* would have *fled*, not *pursued* them into the *bottom* of the *Sea*. A Generation of men able to enter into the *Devil*, the only thing more unsatiate than *Hell*: some men pretend to *fear* and *honour* them, but 'tis as men Court their *Hangman*, for a more *favourable Execution*; or as the *Indians* Worship the *Devil* and the *Spaniard*, that they may do them the *less harm*. When he is *examining* an *Estate*, you would imagine him *casting* its *water*, to find what *Disease* it labours of, and to be sure (like a *Knavish Chyrurgeon*) he will either *find* a *Cure* of it, or *make* one. Sometimes he plays the *Baud*, prostitutes the same *Title* to all commers, and (if you Fee him soundly) will not stick to Mortgage the *same Estate* for you to *seven* several Persons: sometimes he *folders* up a *crackt Title*, and passes it away for a pure *Maiden-head*; if it be *weak*, he dares strengthen it by *Forgery*; and secure but his *Ears*, his *man* and *he* (two *Knights o' th' Post*) shall out-swear the *Devil*. If you would make a *safe Purchase*, you must spend half the value of your *Land* in *searching* the *Title*: then he tells you, your *Estate* is *secured*, that is the best part of it to *himself*.

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But all the flaws he finds in the Title, may be stopt up with Money from the *adverse party*: if *both* Fee him soundly, then, that he may deal equally between man and man, he makes them *alike miserable*, drawing the Couveyances on either side so *weak*, and yet so *strong*, that *neither* party shall have the *advantage*; but *both* endeavouring to *recover* what *each* knows to be his *own*, and *he* to be *neithers*, they at last waste away their Estates (like a *Snow-ball*) with *handling* it, spend *double* the *purchase-money* to *secure* the *Land*, and the *Usurers* (to end the strife) *seize* on that which *each* of them have *Mortgaged*, and *neither* can *redeem*. Then the *Usurers* part stakes, and so *lim* and *canton* out a brave *Estate*, (like *Alexander's Empire*) into *petty Lordships*. If he deal in *Money*, his *Usurer* and *he*, are like the *Hunter* and his *Dogg*, (or to speak in their own Phrase) they answer each other, as the *Counter-part* and *Original Indenture*: then (like the *Devil*) he walks up and down, seeking whom he may devour; does his best endeavour to make you poor, that you may be forc'd for *supply* to *him*, who is the *last remedy*, and indeed worse than the *disease*. If you would *borrow*, he marches to your *Neighbours*, enquiring into your *Estate*, and smelling at your *Reputation*, spoyling your *good name* to gain you *credit*. He is for maintaining *old Customs*, and
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(among the rest) for that of *ten* in the *hundred*; and what now a dayes *bate* the *Usurer*, you must pay the *Scrivener*. If his *Usurer* and he chance to start a young *Heir*, he is employed, like the *Hound*, to pursue the *G A M E*, which he never leaves till he hath given him a *Mortal gripe*: then like the *Lyon* and the *Jackall* they divide the *Prey*; the *Usurer* gnaws off all the *flesh*, and the *Scrivener* picks the *bones*. To strike the greater terrour into the *Novice*, he seats himself in all his *Formalities*; his furr'd *Cap* and *Gown*, his *Pen* in one *Ear* (if both be not off for *Forgery* in the midst of a company of *Writings*, the *Cases* of so many undone persons, a sight worle than the *Gallows*, able to extort *Confession* without the help of a *Wrack*, composing his *Countenance* after the gravest Mode, dreadfully ridiculous, and most *Majestically simple*, when after a tedious *harangue* (like a *Dog* making a *circle* before he lies down) of the ill fortune of those young men which fall into the hands of *Anavish* *Scriveners*, (where he reads him his own *Doom* in the *third Person*) and of his *happeness* in lighting on him (where to understand him rightly, he must read him *backwards*) telling him how desirous he is of his *prosperity*, seeing to hang upon him to prevent his *ruine*, (When 'tis as a *weight* hangs on a *Clock*, to drive him on faster; (or as an *Angler*, seeming to draw away the

the baite, that he may the more *greedily take it*) at last he falls upon that he hath most mind to, his *Estate*: Desires him to deal plainly, and lay open his *case*, as a *sick man* does to his *Physician*, that he may the better *Cure* him, whereas 'tis really like the *Baringa* man's breast to his *Enemy*, that he may the surer *wound* him; while my *Youngster*, not daring to do otherwise, deals (*God knows*) very *simply* and *honestly*; the *Scrivener* mean time, like an *Inquisitor*, stretching him upon the *Wrack*, writing down his *Confession*, out of all which he draws up a *Sentence*, miscalled a *Bond* or a *Conveyance*: and when he hath wound him up to the *highest* peg, and perceives him pumpt quite *dry*, he lets him *down*, presents him a *paper*, makes him Sign and Seal the Warrant of his own *Execution*: and then by *Law* *Condemns* and *Executes* him. This unmerciful *Thief* robs the very *Beggar*, and sticks not to pick a *Courtiers* pocket, though he knows 'tis the Kings Money. He is so strict a Prosecutor of Justice, that he maintains it beyond the utmost *rigour*; stretches *Justice* *her self* upon the *wrack*, and upon an *hours* failure, seizes more than the *forfeiture*. He prays for *Non-performance* of the Condition, that he may take the advantage of the *Penalty*: and exceeds so far in Cruelty, that cursed *Jew*, that he will have not the *flesh* alone, but the *blood* too. When you have incurr'd a *forfeiture*,

ture, he tells you the exactness of the Law, and to be secure from the Usurer, you must compound with the Scrivener, and almost pay the Penalty to be freed from it. But when he has Bound you never so fast, for money he will Release you; teach you to evade the Articles himself composed, content so he may be a Knave, to prove no Scrivener. Thus he plays fast and loose, breaths hot and cold, and the same Devil that binds the Charms, unties them too. 'Tis a pretty sight to see them running about the Exchange, smelling at the Merchants, just like Dogs, fawning upon some, and biting others. If any be in his Books, he sticks to him like a Remora, a sufficient Lett to his weightiest affairs; and while his Vessel suffers Shipwrack abroad, he himself splits on a more dangerous Rock, enchanted by these Syrens at home. A Plague worse than Pirates, Shipwrack it self cannot save you from them: your very Conveys (your Sureties) protect you not from them, but secure you the faster to them. No Money, which secures you from a Thief, will not save you from him: he is one misery after the very last, the cause of our ruine and the effect too: when all other misfortunes have destroyed us, he follows us as a reserve, and after Execution quarters us. When all the World has shaken you off, he seizes you;

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Lice and Scriveners stick fast unto you when you are *beggard*. If a Man *wade* innocently into the *muddy streams* of *Suretyship*, he is suddenly seiz'd by these *Leeches*, which once fastned, will never leave sucking till he *faint*, or they *burst* and *die*. He has a great *stroak* at *killing* men; a miserable *comforter* of *languishing* Patients; one of those *ill-bodeing* creatures that *haunt* houses against a *time* of *Death*; a *Devil* that comes to *torment* Men *before* their *time*. While the *Divine* prepares you for *Death*, and the *Physician* *hastens* it, he does *both*. Like the *Hangman*, he first *dis-robes* you of your *outer garments*, and then *kills* you. That you may go to *Heaven* the *lighter*, he *dis-burdens* you of your *Earth*, your *Estate*, and then *perswades* you out of *despair* to *die*, having parted with all the *World*; and nothing now left you to *forlake*, but your *body*. For a good *Peere* will do a *viuent's* *Conuiesie*, and leave the intended *Heir* so *disputable*, that the *deceased Testator* may as soon *interpret* his own *mind* as the *Lawyer*: inserting such *equivocal* terms, as may be *interpreted* to be any *Mans Will* more than the *Testators*; rendring the *sense* as *ambiguous*, as that of the *Oracles*; and indeed like the *last words* of a *dying man*, *ambiguous* and *unintelligible*. If he first do a good *Legacy* for himself, he knows 'tis *past* his *power*, 'tis

'tis but skipping it in the reading, and the Will sealed up till the Testators Death, who can betray him? Thus he Cheats you In the Name of God, and says his Prayers backwards indeed, beginning his Rogueries with an Amen; so that you sign a blank though it be full of Writing; and this your most Voluntary act is yet against your VWill. He begins very piously, and bequeaths your first Legacie, your Soul, with a great deal of Complement to God Almighty; to whom he commands you with as much form of expression, and abundance of significant words, as if he made Indentures with the Almighty to receive you, and would be sure he should find no Starting holes to evade the Articles. And he makes your VWill like a Pharisees long Prayer, with a house at the end of it. When he has done he turns you over to the Divine, before whom he has commonly the honour to be preferred, and there he leaves you like a Christmas Box, expecting no more out of you till you are broke. To Conclude, like the Mullet, his Blood is Ink; 'tis the Skin of a Sheep, not the Wool that cloaths him, and a Goose quill, not the flesh, that feeds him. 'Tis one of the last Trades Men can flie to, indeed the very last, being but a more noble Thievery, a gentiler way of picking Pockets, a ruined Persons last refuge, where he revenges his destruction by re-paying it:

it: being himself *undone*, he strives to *ruine* others; and like a right Devil, draws as many as he can into that Hell where himself has perished. But I have made a *Character* as long as an *Indenture*; I leave him with the *Prayer* of all good People, That He may be *poisoned* with his own *Ink*, *stob'd* with his *Penknife*, his *Ears* remain in the *Pillory*, his *Noddle* set out at the *Shop-door* for a *Loggerhead*, and the rest of him hang'd up to *Eternity* in a *Label*; and since it is impossible he should get to *Heaven*, for *Hellsake* may he hang *between*.

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